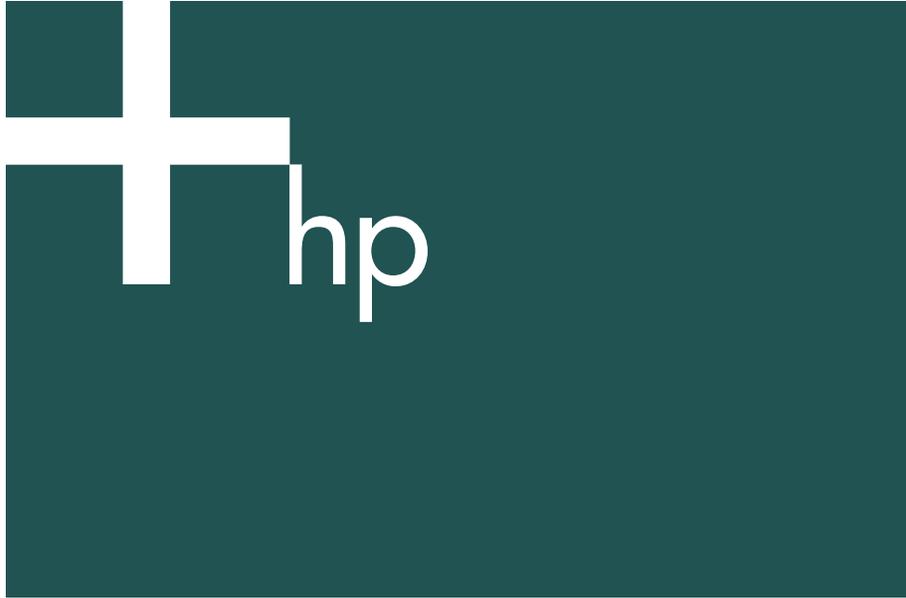


# Investment in HP Adaptive Enterprise infrastructure buoys financial-services portal

Assureweb Limited



"HP ProLiant servers give us true enterprise capabilities – plus the same level of reliability, scalability, and robustness provided by a more expensive proprietary environment."

– Director of Production Services Andrew Riddett, Assureweb Limited

Assureweb Limited links Independent Financial Advisers (IFAs) with large financial institutions and provides access to comparative quotes, fund supermarkets, and endowment trading services. Based in Cheltenham, U.K., the company's trading platform and innovative desktop software, such as "Mi-solution," let these financial intermediaries gain business efficiency, streamline costs, and improve their client services. With excellent market coverage, daily financial news, simple navigation, and a secure area to save quotes, the Assureweb portal provides vital information to approximately 16,000 IFAs at no charge.

To maintain this high level of service, Assureweb needed a resilient, robust infrastructure to deliver real-time services, transactions, and messaging via a quality hosting site. The firm also mandated the same features and benefits usually only found in an expensive

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proprietary environment so it could provide an end-to-end electronic trading experience for its growing client base. Assureweb looked no further than HP solutions to help them stay ahead of the competition.

"From the portal to the desktop software to other elements of our value-oriented services, technology is what we do – and it is the key differentiator in our services," says Assureweb's Director of Production Services Andrew Riddett. "We rely on HP technology to help us gain competitive advantage and achieve our business goals."

#### **Assurance in unsurpassed technology leadership**

The company's Internet presence, growing user base, and real-time quotation services require a robust, always-available IT solution. "Our users expect high-quality service," Riddett admits. "Along with their expectations, we conduct messaging in real-time and therefore need the same levels of reliability and scalability previously associated only with proprietary environments. We've found that industry-standard HP ProLiant servers stand out from their competition in providing us with such a platform – and at a fraction of the cost of a proprietary solution."

Since establishing its trading platform, Assureweb has deployed ProLiant servers to offer a range of service options. Riddett explains: "We wanted to establish a



## Challenge

- Build a resilient, robust infrastructure to deliver messaging, real-time quotations, and electronic business transactions
- Provide time and cost efficiencies to the company's client base
- Offer superior economics and price-performance in a distributed computing environment
- Maximize staff productivity and lower total cost of ownership

## Solution

### Hardware

- More than 70 HP ProLiant servers, including models DL360, DL380, and DL580
- An HP StorageWorks SAN to support the ProLiant DL580 HA/F500 server clusters, which includes: HP StorageWorks Modular Array 8000 with Fibre Channel connectivity, HSG80 redundant controllers, 3 HP StorageWorks Enclosure drive shelves (model 4354), 2 HP StorageWorks 8-port Fibre Channel SAN Switches
- HP Remote Insight Lights-Out Edition (RILOE) boards

### Software

- HP ProLiant Cluster HA/F500 cluster kit
- HP ProLiant Essentials Rapid Deployment Pack
- Insight Manager 7 SP2
- HP StorageWorks Secure Path software
- Microsoft Windows 2000, Windows 2000 Advanced Server, and Windows NT 4.0 operating systems
- Microsoft SQL Server 2000 and SQL Server 7.0
- Other Microsoft software, including: Application Center 2000, BizTalk Server, Cluster Server, Commerce Server, Exchange Server, .NET Server

### HP Services

- Installation and optimization of the HP ProLiant Cluster HA/F500 and HP StorageWorks SAN
- Ongoing knowledge transfer

## Results

- The HP Adaptive Enterprise infrastructure provides reliability, scalability, resilience, and robustness, allowing Assureweb to deliver end-to-end electronic trading, time savings, and business efficiencies.
- The HP ProLiant server platform supports online services to 16,000 independent financial advisers and intermediaries, and scales rapidly to capitalize on increases in market demand.
- Industry-standard HP ProLiant servers give Assureweb comparable levels of performance and availability previously associated with proprietary environments, without the expensive acquisition and management costs of legacy systems.
- HP automated-provisioning and manageability tools maximize staff productivity and lower total cost of ownership by reducing the complexity, time, and labor in installing and managing servers.

"We are currently growing very rapidly and will continue into the future. With an HP Adaptive Enterprise infrastructure built upon ProLiant systems and management tools, we have proven ability to scale our IT infrastructure with our business - without scaling complexity."



quality hosting site and needed a technology partner able to provide a rock-solid solution to run our most mission-critical applications. We considered Dell servers, but after considering our experience with HP ProLiant servers – as well as the superior availability, manageability, and advanced deployment tools for them – we decided HP is the ideal solution to deliver a reliable and cost-effective hosting site for easier management as we continue to grow."

HP ProLiant DL360 servers functioning as domain controllers and monitoring systems, and ProLiant DL380 servers running various Microsoft applications underpin the firm's portfolio of transactional services. A ProLiant DL580 server hosts the firm's largest database, while other ProLiant servers support another 250 SQL Server databases. In addition, four clustered ProLiant DL580 servers (HP ProLiant cluster HA/F500) host core databases. Further, Assureweb's storage area network (SAN) includes an HP StorageWorks Modular Array 8000 and three HP StorageWorks Enclosure Model 4354 drive shelves.

#### **Counting on first-rate coverage for routine maintenance and management**

In selecting the right server platform, Riddett and his staff evaluated the cost of maintenance and how that expense might impact Assureweb's total cost of ownership (TCO) over the servers' lifecycle. "We found the management of HP ProLiant servers to be the most cost-effective," Riddett emphasizes, "which is a direct reflection of the server platform's reliability, upgrade capabilities, pre-failure warranties, and other powerful management and control solutions. For example, the HP Remote Insight Lights-Out Edition (RiLOE) board enables our IT support staff to be more productive. In our opinion, HP ProLiant servers are far ahead of any others in the manageability realm." Assureweb now employs more than 70 ProLiant servers.

In addition to RiLOE, helpful applications – including the HP ProLiant Essentials Rapid Deployment Pack and Insight Manager 7 software – maximize reliability and system uptime. Assureweb's Lead Database Administrator Darren Green says, "We handle most of our server installations internally. The HP ProLiant Essentials Rapid Deployment Pack simplifies these deployments, so we spend very little time installing additional drivers. It's painless to bring ProLiant servers online."

Regarding the management and monitoring of Assureweb's IT environment, Green notes, "The Insight Manager 7 solution is absolutely essential, because we can't possibly check every server manually. The consolidation of device lists and server-performance status information gives us a quick overview of what is happening in our environment, as well as the ability to drill down to investigate specific problems on an individual server. The integration between Insight Manager tools and Microsoft Windows 2000, plus SSL encryption of management data, makes server management more secure and private."

In addition to breakthrough management tools, the Assureweb IT staff engages HP Services as a time-saving resource. For example, HP Services installed the cluster and trained the staff on maximizing the HP ProLiant Essentials Rapid Deployment Pack and Insight Manager.

"HP Services professionals gave us a jump-start when they installed the cluster," says Green. "They optimized the HP StorageWorks SAN for our needs and shared with us best practices on how to manage it and maximize our uptime. HP's knowledge and experience made it easy for us to deploy and integrate our clustering solutions. With the HP Adaptive Enterprise infrastructure in place, our IT systems are flexible enough to enable new business directions, instead of restricting them."

### Partnerships yield high return on IT investment

Many of HP's technology developments are the result of successful collaborations with key software partners, such as Microsoft. Since 2002, Assureweb has taken advantage of its first Microsoft .NET Server application running on a ProLiant server. Riddett attests that the HP-Microsoft platform is yielding significant gains. During the first quarter of 2003, Assureweb experienced a 100 percent growth rate in both quotation traffic and number of active users – even amid an uncertain economic climate. Thanks to ProLiant servers, Assureweb's IT environment continued to operate without missing a beat – or a transaction.

"We've found that the combination of HP hardware, Microsoft software, and Assureweb development expertise is the best way to create a rich range of functionality and services," Riddett concludes. "Our technology suite attracts users to our site and helps us deliver time and cost savings. Our HP ProLiant server architecture will continue to give us high levels of throughput and uptime to facilitate the electronic placement of new business applications exclusive to IFAs. In selecting HP as our technology partner, we asked much of the company, and its representatives exceeded our expectations. They proved we made the right decision to invest significantly in HP solutions."

### Company profile:

Owned by Misys PLC and five of the United Kingdom's largest pension companies, Assureweb Limited ([www.assureweb.co.uk](http://www.assureweb.co.uk)) is an important distribution channel for financial services – including pension, annuity, retirement planning, and life insurance. The Cheltenham, U.K.-based firm links Independent Financial Advisers (IFAs) with large financial institutions and provides access to comparative quotes, fund supermarkets, and endowment trading services. Assureweb is also part of Sesame Group Limited, a wholly owned subsidiary of Misys PLC; and is a sister company to Sesame, now the UK's largest IFA network, which became a single regulated entity in August 2003.



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